

# The Other Utah

## Nonurban Focus

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### The Other Wage and the Other Utah

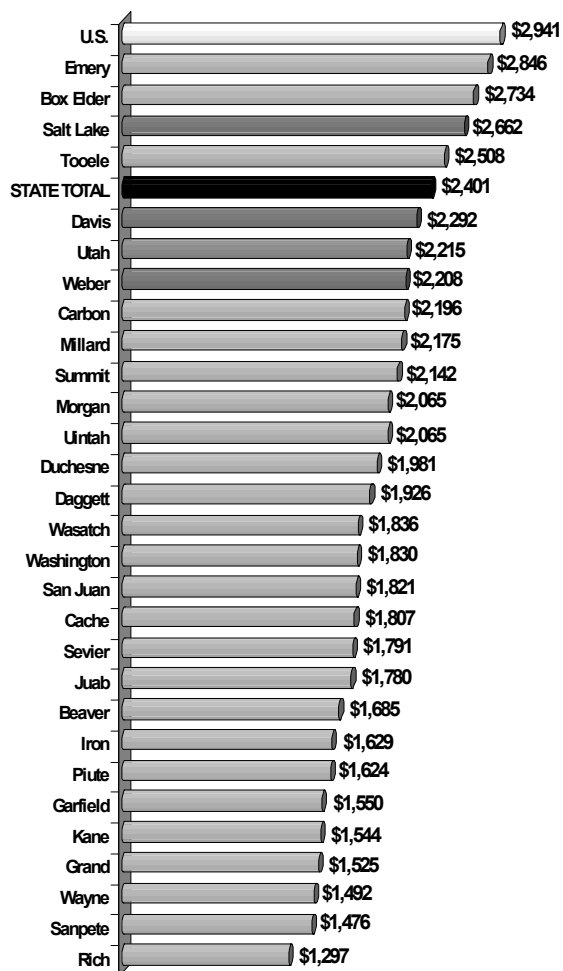
You've probably seen the very interesting occupational wage information in this issue. This data is collected via a massive survey of Utah employers. But, wait! There's more wage data out there. As a result of managing the unemployment insurance program, the Department of Workforce Services receives employment and wage information from the vast majority of Utah's employers. Collected information does not include the self-employed and many agricultural employers.

#### The problem is. . .

As with most data, this set does have its limitations. Wages are reported by employee for an entire quarter (no hourly wages). And, we can't tell which employees are "full-time" and which jobs are "part-time." Also, there isn't a way to attach occupations to this wage data.

Basically, we just add all the wages paid in a quarter and divide that number by the number of jobs to get an average wage. Despite its limitations, this average monthly wage provides an interesting indicator of the economic well-being of an area's workers. In many low-wage areas, workers must find two jobs to make ends meet. Some counties may have low average wages because of a high

### 2000 Average Monthly Wage



Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services

concentration of part-time service or trade employment. Other counties may show high wages due to only a few large, higher-paying employers.

### **Urban versus Nonurban**

So how does the average wage issue play out for Utah's urban and nonurban counties? You might suspect that, in general, urban areas pay higher wages than nonurban areas. In this case, intuition and statistics generally coincide. As you can see from the graph of 2000 average monthly wages, the "metro counties" are all clustered near the top of the ranking. The farthest down is Weber County at number seven. You might also notice that no county in Utah has a higher average wage than the United States.

### **Wait a minute. . .**

Yet, the top two counties on the average wage list aren't metro counties at all. Emery and Box Elder counties rank as number one and two in the average wage comparison. Why are they the exceptions to the rule? Emery County's employment is heavily dominated by the high-paying mining and utilities industries. This doesn't mean that Emery County is a worker's paradise, however. Mining employment has been declining in large part because of increases in productivity. At best, the county has stagnated over the past several years. Box Elder County is home to several dominant and higher-paying manufacturing firms, but several of these companies lost employment last year.

### **At the bottom. . .**

Counties at the bottom of the ranking are some of Utah's smallest and most rural counties. While some of these areas have seen strong employment gains in recent years, many jobs are part-time and related to tourism. Also, note the effect of local colleges. Counties where out-of-town college students make up a substantial share of the labor force, such as Washington, Cache, and Iron also tend to have lower wages thanks to the influx of cheap college-student labor and their associated part-time jobs.



- X** The Cedar City Council has approved an incentive deal with Integrated Process Systems. The company is considering building in the city's industrial park and bringing 25 to 50 jobs to the community.
- X** The Delta Egg Farm accounted for almost all of the 64-percent increase in Utah egg production between 1999 and 2001. About 80 jobs have been created since the farm opened.
- X** Ground-breaking has been held for the Gunnison Valley Hospital expansion in Sanpete County. The expansion will result in a 70-percent increase in the hospital's size.
- X** Nevco Energy LLC has purchased more than 13 acres of land near Sigurd in Sevier County and has the option for another 1,400 as the site for a proposed coal and gas fired power plant.
- X** The United Park City Mines Company presented plans to the Wasatch County Commission for a luxury mountain resort in the Bonanza Flats area.

*For more information about Utah's nonurban counties, check out:*  
<http://wi.dws.state.ut.us> then click on "State, County and Local Information"